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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON WAR ON IRAQ

#### Summary

-- The Jordanian print media today, March 25, continues to focus on the war on Iraq. Lead stories focus on "fierce" battles in some Iraqi towns and the resistance of the Iraqi people. Another lead story, carried under huge banner headlines, focuses on King Abdullah's remarks to the Jordanian Upper House of Parliament that Jordan will not allow its airspace "to be used to attack Iraq".

#### Editorial Commentary

-- "Be free, whether you like it or not!"

Chief Editor Nabil Sharif writes on the back page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/25): "It is evident that America and Britain are now feeling the crisis that the pro-Israel supporters in the White House have put them in.. The Iraqi people have thwarted the wagers of the invaders who had wagered on a quick war with little resistance. The most noble of 'surprises' achieved by the Iraqi people that confused the invaders is probably this determination to stand fast in Iraq and not to leave Iraq. Not a single Iraqi person left Iraq for the refugee camps that were set up by international organizations. On the contrary, the border point witnessed a mass Iraqi immigration back into Iraq to participate with their people in the defense of their homeland.. The invading forces are likely to escalate the aggression and use excessive force to impose 'liberation' on the Iraqi people, whether they like it or not. Despite the prevailing pessimism, now is the time for creative diplomatic action that would find a way for the invading forces out of their crisis and would salvage the Iraqi people from the bloodbaths that are planned by the invaders. Is there anyone out there who is willing to sound the bell to salvage the Iraqi people?"

-- "The gap between reality and expectations"

Daily columnist Urayb Rintawi writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/25): "There is an American-British confusion in managing the war on Iraq, a confusion that cannot dampened by the 'sure tone of voice' of both administrations in addressing their stances. It is a confusion that stems from the fact that the American scheme has come in collision with a series of surprises in the war operations.. Despite the misery of the Iraqi media rhetoric and the Iraqi Minister of Information's resort to the use of swear words, the confidence in the Iraqi rhetoric so far is much higher than that in the American and British rhetoric.. If this continues, it is likely that the confusion is going to escalate and then Washington would find itself forced to adopt steps that would cover its failure and the failure of its project. The most dangerous thing that could happen is for Washington to resort to the use of impetuous and brute force to speed up the conclusion of the battle. This means that promises of a quick and clean war would not be abided by and that the coming unfolding chapters of the war would carry the most serious of consequences."

-- "The ferociousness of the media war and the loss of the Arab media"

Daily columnist Bater Wardam writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/25): "Since the first day of the war, the Americans adopted a media system that targets the Iraqi people and tries to bring the people in line with the American political rhetoric of 'liberating Iraq'. Yet, the credibility of the American media was completely blown away when facts on the ground proved the falseness of American claims.. The American anger

at publishing the photos of the dead and captured Americans is justifiable, because, for the first time, it showed the American people and the world that this war is not picnic as envisaged by Mr. Rumsfeld. Of course, seeing dead people of any race or religion is not amusing, and the American soldiers are, at the end of the day, human beings with hopes and dreams different from wanting to die so that American oil companies can get contracts for the Iraqi oil or to protect Israel. However, publishing those photos was a political necessity that made Mr. George Bush realize that the war is not a computer game that can be played without real American losses. The problem remains that truth is the first victim of the war, and the conflict to win the media battle means that professional and moral standards are going to be thwarted."

GNEHM